

# **Recognition Session**

**The National Environmental Performance Track  
Improving the Achievement Track  
December 13, 2000  
Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC**

## **Introduction**

Participants in the Achievement Track Recognition Session discussed ways to foster greater recognition of Performance Track companies. Four EPA officials and 14 company representatives attended the session. An EPA official provided opening remarks. Topics discussed included defining the audience; overcoming negative perceptions/barriers to good environmental press; and future expectations of EPA.

## **Purpose of the Session**

The primary purpose of the session was to discuss how EPA can assist efforts to increase public awareness of the goals of Achievement Track and highlight the accomplishments of Achievement Track members facilities.

### **Defining the Audience**

Participants agreed that the audiences for promoting Achievement Track participants will be broad, diverse, and dependent upon individual companies' products or services. Communication methods will be determined by the targeted audience. Member companies could maintain active websites, host open houses, or publish in-house and external newsletters.

EPA's role should be two-fold: 1) to provide companies with the necessary tools to disseminate information to employees and shareholders; and 2) to inform the public with regard to the program's purpose.

State environmental agencies are another critical audience for EPA. Ordinarily, states respond more readily to programs where funding is attached. With this in mind, EPA could link environmental programs and state grant money, and enlist states to perform outreach activities for Achievement Track.

### **Promotional Strategies**

There was wide agreement that EPA should arrange ceremonies at individual facilities to help promote the Achievement Track Program. EPA should also assist industry and organizations with press releases to highlight participants' successes. In addition, EPA could institute a mentoring program to reward both the mentor and the potential new Achievement Track Program member.

Some participants suggested that Achievement Track should follow OSHA's strategy, which promotes name-brand recognition for its participants. Others pointed out differences in how industry perceives health and safety issues as opposed to environmental issues: health and safety issues are better understood. This difference implies that lessons learned from OSHA's Voluntary Protections Program and Achievement Track may not be directly relevant to Achievement Track.

Participants also expressed the need for employee "ownership" in order for the recognition component of the Achievement Track Program to be successful. Employees should be involved in all stages of program planning, implementation, evaluation, and promotional efforts to ensure a facility's success as a good environmental steward. Moreover, employee involvement during the promotional stage often leads to community involvement.

Additionally, the Achievement Track Program should be incorporated into the overall corporate culture and combine financial incentives with educational and outreach programs.

### **Overcoming Negative Perceptions/ Barriers to Good Environmental Press**

Participants expressed a need to overcome negative perceptions of environmental programs and cited several barriers to good environmental press coverage: media interest in reporting controversial issues versus positive events; public apathy regarding the environment; and environmental/trade groups who may have different agendas. Participants were also concerned that EPA will eventually discontinue the Performance Track Program which makes industry reluctant to invest valuable or limited resources.

To overcome the barriers, participants stated that there must be a level of buy-in from non-governmental organizations and EPA could seek program endorsement from major environmental groups and centerist organizations. Also, EPA should validate the efforts of companies that discover innovative solutions for improving the quality of life without causing adverse environmental impacts.

### **Future Expectations of EPA**

The group offered the following recommendations for EPA's promotion of Achievement Track:

- use community-based newspapers;
- consult marketing and advertising experts;
- make Achievement Track an event;
- institute profit-sharing incentives;
- ensure state and national recognition; and
- provide publicity for company/organizational outreach programs.

Finally, the group urged EPA to develop common measures for environmental benefits.